1480

AN

ARGUMENT

ADDRESSED TO THE

YEOMANRY OF IRELAND,

DEMONSTRATING

THE RIGHT, THE PROPRIETY, THE UTILITY,

AND

THE OBLIGATION

OF DECLARING THEIR SENTIMENTS ON

POLITICAL SUBJECTS,

IN THEIR PUBLIC DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER OF

YEOMEN.

BY EUNOMUS.

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AN

ARGUMENT, &c.

THE right of ſelf-preſervation is inherent in man, independent of poſitive inſtitutions, and inalienable. This right comprehends not only the right of preſerving life, but alſo of preſerving every thing, which reaſon preſcribes as neceſſary to the true enjoyment of life. In other words, the right of ſelf-preſervation, when applied to a moral agent, is a right to the free exerciſe of every power natural and moral eſſential to the happineſs of ſuch a being. Civil ſociety is a voluntary union of men formed for the ſole purpoſe of ſecuring more effectually the enjoyment of this right, an aſſociation, to which they are led by ſympathy and by reaſon, as the beſt means of accompliſhing a lawful end. Every abſtract right involves the right of practical attainment. That is, if any end is lawful, every means of attaining the end, which does not interfere with a more general end, is alſo lawful. The general end of the actions of every creature is the happineſs ſuitable to its nature. The happineſs of man conſiſts

in virtue, or in right moral conduct. Morality muſt always be conſiſtent with itſelf. Hence an end, however good, can never juſtify immoral means of attainment. But with this ſingle limitation, a right to any object eſſentially implies a right to purſue the moſt effectual means of acquiring, and ſecuring, that object. A right to happineſs without a right to the beſt means of practical enjoyment is a manifeſt contradiction, which, to uſe the words of Junius, cannot be conceived without a confuſion of ideas, nor expreſſed without a ſoleciſm in language.

God has created man a moral agent, he has therefore created him with freedom of will, and man can no more renounce his freedom of will than he can renounce his nature. Man cannot become a ſlave without a crime, without counteracting the deſigns of Providence, by changing the moral agent into the brute. Hence no civil inſtitution can be rightfully formed, which is not conformable to this freedom of will. Compact may confer rights and create duties in matters of indifference. But no compact can abrogate moral relations, or add additional force to moral obligations. The moral relation and the moral obligation are antecedent to, and independent of, all poſitive inſtitutions. It is therefore nonſenſe to ſay that a people has a right to liberty by compact, and that, when the ſovereign power violates the compact, the people is abſolved from obedience. Man has a right to liberty, becauſe he is man—becauſe God has formed him a moral agent, with certain powers and affections, leading to a certain end, to the proper exerciſe and enjoyment of which

liberty

liberty of thought and of action is eſſential, a liberty, which human contrivance can neither give nor take away.

Does civil government then confer no rights, impoſe no duties? In matters morally indifferent, many. In matters morally good or bad, not one. With reſpect to theſe latter then, is civil government of no uſe? Of the greateſt uſe. It is a contrivance for giving effect to natural rights. And the only rational meaning of a compact between the people and the ſovereign power in any civil ſociety, is, that the people has inſtituted certain auxiliary means of purſuing the end of human action, which, at the time, ſeemed beſt calculated for the purpoſe. And, therefore, tho' the ſovereign power ſhould undeviatingly perform its part of the means thus deviſed, that is, ſhould honeſtly perform its part of the compact, whenever reaſon and experience demonſtrate that the means already deviſed, or in other words, the form of government, are inſufficient to the end propoſed, and better means preſent themſelves, the people poſſeſſes the very ſame right of eſtabliſhing other means or of forming a new government, which it originally poſſeſſed of eſtabliſhing any—a right eſſentially flowing from the laws of nature, and altogether independent of the conduct of the ſovereign power.

Is there then no difference between the caſes, where the ſovereign power violates the compact, and where it acts conformably to it, but the compact is found inſufficient to the purpoſe of its inſtitution? A vaſt difference with reſpect to thoſe exerciſing the ſovereign power—no difference with reſpect to the people.

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Where the terms of the truſt repoſed in the ſovereign power are found inadequate to the end, or, in other words, where the conſtitution of the government is bad, but there has been no delinquency in the truſtees, the people has a right to change the terms of the truſt, but not to puniſh the truſtees. Where the truſt has been merely violated, the people has a right to depoſe and to puniſh. Where both circumſtances exiſt together, the people has a right to new model the conſtitution of the truſt, and to depoſe and puniſh the men, who dared to violate the principles even of a bad one.

From theſe obvious and important truths, it ſeems inconteſtibly to follow, that Liberty, with every means, neceſſary to its attainment and ſecurity, is the birth-right of man, eſſential to his nature, independent of, and inalienable by his contract. Liberty is the power of purſuing happineſs agreeably to our nature—of doing good to ourſelves without doing injury to others—of exerciſing our faculties natural and moral, as moral accountable beings. The enjoyment of this liberty can be the only legitimate object of civil government. The right to Liberty is included in the right of ſelf-preſervation. The right of ſelf-preſervation in a rational, moral being, is not the right of mere animal exiſtence alone, it is a right to the uncontrouled exertion of every attribute, which, in ſuch a being, can render exiſtence the bleſſing, which Providence intended—to the uncontrouled exertion of every power of the underſtanding, and every impulſe of the heart, which is not forbidden by reaſon, conſcience, and religion—to the uncontrouled exertion of every

every faculty, which can exalt the man above the brute, the freeman above the ſlave.

Men enter into ſociety, and conſtitute civil governments for the more effectually ſecuring the enjoyment of this right, and muſt of courſe, carry with them into ſociety a right to the uſe of every means eſſential to that enjoyment. Government cannot be rightfully inſtituted but for the ſecurity of man; man in his beſt ſtate, not mere animal man, but man rational and moral. Man cannot become a ſlave without a violation of the laws of his being—he has a right to liberty as inalienable as the faculties of his mind, as his reaſon, and his conſcience—a right of which power may phyſically prevent the exerciſe, but which it never can morally deſtroy.

Hence all civil government, which is founded not in mere phyſical force, but in moral right, muſt recogniſe in the governed a right to every means neceſſary to their preſervation, as beings formed for moral exertion, and moral happineſs—to the preſervation in a word, of Liberty. What are theſe means? They are many and various. One there is ſuper-eminent, which guarantees, and can alone guarantee the enjoyment of every other, and which is morally as immutable, and inalienable, as the right of ſelf-preſervation itſelf. What is this? The right of poſſeſſing the beſt *phyſical* means of uſing phyſical force, if neceſſary, for the preſervation not only of life, but of whatever can render life deſirable to a free agent capable of moral happineſs. To uſe a more reſtricted deſcription intelligible

ligible by all—THE RIGHT OF HAVING ARMS.—God has formed man with good and with bad propenſities, but at the ſame time, with reaſon and conſcience, which demonſtrate that the good are to be cheriſhed, and the bad controuled. But if ſome men contravene reaſon and conſcience, what follows? If by their conduct they injure their fellow men, are their fellow men unreſiſtingly to become their prey? Are they, who endeavour to purſue a happineſs agreeable to their nature, tamely to ſuffer that happineſs to be deſtroyed by thoſe, who act contrary to nature? Aſſuredly not. What follows? That men have a right to repel injury, if neceſſary, by force. What is the force of man? He is not formed, with the native ſtrength, with the native arms, with the muſcle, the teeth, and the claws of the lion. But he is formed with an inventive mind, which ſubjects inanimate nature to his controul, and ſupplies him with modes of defence more formidable and effectual than the native arms of the brute creation. Is he not then to uſe the means of defence, with which nature has ſupplied him? Beyond all queſtion. When every other means of defence has been tried, and tried in vain, he has a right by the *ſword* to reſiſt whatever would rob him of life, or of the free exerciſe of thoſe powers of body and mind, which alone can render life a bleſſing.

As the right of ſelf-defence then is clear, as it is abſurd to admit the right of ſelf-defence without admitting the right of uſing the moſt effectual means of ſelf-defence, and abſurd alſo to admit the right of uſing theſe means without admitting the right of actually poſſeſſing

poſſeſſing the means, it is demonſtratively true, that in every civil ſociety rightfully conſtituted, the people ſhould actually poſſeſs the beſt means of employing phyſical force, if neceſſary to ſelf-defence againſt oppreſſion and injuſtice, for the proper uſe of which means the people is undoubtedly accountable—accountable to no earthly tribunal, but to heaven alone.

Unfortunately indeed for mankind this right has been rarely recogniſed in theory, and more rarely ſtill eſtabliſhed in practice; for unfortunately the great maſs of mankind has in every age of the world been enſlaved—brutaliſed in intellect, debaſed in ſentiment, and abject in ſpirit—the tame unreſiſting prey of all the vile and all the furious paſſions, which take up their abode in the hearts of tyrants.

But in this land of freedom it is otherwiſe. Here this right, ſo eſſentially flowing from the right of ſelf-preſervation, is theoretically acknowledged, and practically, though too partially, enjoyed. Sir William Blackſtone, in his celebrated Commentaries on our Conſtitution and Laws, after enumerating and explaining various natural and impreſcriptible rights of the ſubject, concludes by ſaying, "That to preſerve theſe "rights from violation, it is neceſſary that the conſti-"tution of Parliaments be ſupported in its full vigour, "and limits certainly known be ſet to the royal pre-"rogative. And laſtly, to vindicate theſe rights, "when actually violated or attacked, the ſubjects of "England are entitled, in the firſt place, to the re-"gular adminiſtration and free courſe of juſtice in the

" courts of law; next, to the right of petitioning the " King and Parliament for redreſs of grievances; and " laſtly, to THE RIGHT OF HAVING AND USING ARMS " FOR SELF-PRESERVATION AND DEFENCE." Blackſtone cannot be ſuſpected of entertaining and broaching wild and romantic ideas on liberty and civil government, or of ignorance of the ſpirit and practice of the Britiſh Conſtitution. He may with much greater reaſon be accuſed of maintaining opinions too favourable to prerogative, and contrary to the natural and eternal rights of man. But Blackſtone, without forfeiting every pretention to honeſty, could not deny, indeed could not avoid recogniſing, in a treatiſe written profeſſedly on the laws and Conſtitution of England, the right in the ſubject, of both *having* and *uſing* arms for ſelf-preſervation. It is an inherent right of nature, which no human laws can abrogate, and which our laws expreſsly recogniſe. It is a right foſtered by the genius, and ſanctioned by the practice of our Conſtitution. In this country we have the authority of fact, an authority greater than that of Blackſtone, on the ſubject. In this country we have ſeen *armed citizens*, armed for ſelf-defence, armed for the defence of their native land, and its rights, of life and poſſeſſions dearer than life—Liberty and Independence. As *armed citizens* we have ſeen them hailed by the Parliament, an authority greater than Blackſtone. And in theſe days, even now, we ſee *armed citizens* ſummoned by the ſame Parliament to the actual exerciſe of this right. The YEOMANRY of Ireland are *armed citizens*, are citizens in the actual enjoyment of a right, which

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is derived from the firſt law of nature, and is eſſential to its operation.

For what purpoſe have they been armed? For ſelf-preſervation—for the preſervation of every thing, which can be dear to man—the preſervation of this country from foreign domination—the preſervation of ſelf-government, without which we become machines, the paſſive puppets of villainy and of caprice. What man among them feels that in arming for ſuch purpoſes he has relinquiſhed a ſingle privilege of a freeman? What man among them does *not* feel that, in arming for ſuch purpoſes, he was only ſummoned to the exerciſe of a right, without which every other muſt be illuſory and vain? What man among them does *not* feel that he ſtill poſſeſſes the ſame right to think, to ſpeak, and to act, which he poſſeſſed before; and that ſo far from relinquiſhing any other right, he has not rather, with his preſent character, aſſumed, if not new rights, at leaſt additional obligations and motives to the manly exerciſe of his former rights?

Let us apply theſe obſervations—Every ſubject of the ſtate, who has not, by ſome voluntary act, forfeited his claim to the privileges of a citizen, has an undoubted right to diſcuſs, and to paſs an opinion on every meaſure, which may affect theſe privileges. This is a right eſſential to every freeman, and recogniſed in the ſubjects of this ſtate by the theory and practiſe of the Conſtitution. By the ſame Conſtitution is acknowledged the right in the people of having and uſing arms for ſelf-preſervation, that is, as has

been demonſtrated, for the preſervation not only of life, but of the means of attaining and ſecuring the happineſs of life. Both theſe rights are recogniſed by the Conſtitution, as eſſentially appertaining to the people as freemen. And why? Becauſe the Conſtitution has conſidered both theſe rights as eſſential means of attaining the ſame end—the preſervation of the people, as an aggregate of moral agents united for the ſole purpoſe of more effectually ſecuring life and free agency. Therefore to maintain that an armed citizen has no right to declare his ſentiments on political queſtions, is in effect to maintain that the exerciſe of one eſſential right, neceſſarily deſtroys another eſſential right. Now reaſon demonſtrates, and the Conſtitution of this country admits its deciſion, that both theſe rights are eſſential to the freeman—that is, that they are rights without which man cannot be free—but the eſſentiality of properties to any ſubject neceſſarily implies their compatibility and co-exiſtence in that ſubject—it muſt therefore unavoidably follow, either that the Yeoman poſſeſſes both theſe rights, or that he is not free—Yeomen, chooſe.

But as declamation is too often ſubſtituted for argument, it may probably be aſked, what! would you then maintain the monſtrous poſition that every armed ſubject of the ſtate, that the ſoldiers of our ſtanding army, for inſtance, have a right to diſcuſs and to publiſh opinions on political ſubjects? Moſt certainly not. In this country indeed ſuch a practice has no long time ſince not merely been tolerated but encouraged by miniſters; but it is a practice, which our wiſe

Conſtitution

Conſtitution abhors, and I never will ſully my paper by an example drawn from the conduct of men, to whom this country owes all its misfortunes and all its crimes.

The ſtanding army is an evil rather endured by the body politic than a part of it. The mere ſoldier is not a citizen. The citizen and the mere ſoldier are as diſtinct as free agency and neceſſity, as liberty and ſlavery. The citizen is one, who has entered into ſociety the better to attain the dignity of his nature. The mere ſoldier is one, who has ſurrendered himſelf, as far as man can ſurrender himſelf, body and ſoul, to the abſolute diſpoſal of another. He is almoſt as paſſive as the ſword, with which he fights. He is the wretched inſtrument of that bloody ambition, which deſolates the earth. He is bought and ſold like the beaſt of the field. As a blood-hound he is let looſe upon the peaceable and induſtrious inhabitants of the plains, to ravage and deſtroy. What are the ſtanding armies of the faireſt and moſt civiliſed portion of the earth, of Europe, the ſeat of a mild and benevolent Religion, of ſcience and the arts? What are they, but dreadful diſeaſes in the body politic, growing out of the ignorance and untoward circumſtances of paſt times, which princes knew too well how to convert to the aggrandiſement of their power, and the gratification of their luſts? What are they, but enormous and expenſive machines of deſtruction, moved and directed by all the malignant and all the petty paſſions of the human heart, by the pride, the revenge, the ambition of kings and of miniſters, by the jealouſies and intrigues

trigues of panders and of whores? What are they, but deſtroying hurricanes, which ſweep away at once the fruits and the cultivators of the ſoil, the products and the means of induſtry, the monuments of literature and the arts, the works of ages, in the tempeſt of an hour?

From ſuch monſtrous productions, the offspring not of civil government but of tyranny, not of wiſdom and virtue, but of folly and of vice, no argument in the preſent caſe can poſſibly be drawn. There is not the ſlighteſt analogy between the armed citizen and the ſoldier. The one is armed by right, the other by wrong—the one to ſave, the other to deſtroy—the one as a free, the other as a neceſſary agent—in the one the carrying of arms is a virtue, in the other it is a crime.

Does the armed citizen, does the Yeoman feel that he is the paſſive inſtrument of folly and of guilt? Does he feel that in arming to maintain the Conſtitution, the Liberty, and the Independence of his Country, he has parted with an iota of his privileges as a man and a citizen? Does he feel that in the fruition of one eſſential right, is neceſſarily merged the fruition of another? Does he feel that in bracing on the buckler of Liberty, his thoughts have been manacled, and his mouth gagged—that at the very moment, when his heart beats higheſt, it ſhould find no utterance—that the tongue ſhould refuſe its office, when in its office it would be moſt honoured—that the feelings of the freeman ſhould periſh in the ſilence of the ſlave—that the

ſympathies

ſympathies of nature ſhould be chained, and the enthuſiaſm of virtue die in the boſom, which gives it birth? No—he does not feel thus—Reaſon, the Conſtitution of his country, and every ingenuous ſentiment, which can diſtinguiſh the freeman from the ſlave, tell him that he ought not to feel thus. They tell him, that, when armed to protect his rights, it is abſurd to think that he loſes them—that, when armed to protect his rights, he ſhould feel ſtrong, and not weak—that he ſhould feel encreaſed energy of action, not privation of bodily and mental powers—that he ſhould feel expanded not contracted, elevated not depreſſed, exalted not degraded, proud not debaſed, bold not ſpiritleſs, raiſed above his fellow-citizens not ſunk beneath them.

But it is *dangerous* that the armed citizen ſhould utter the dictates of his reaſon, and the feelings of his heart. Why? It may *overawe* the government. Why then is he armed at all? It is the misfortune of the bulk of mankind that a ſmall number of knaves cajole them by words, impoſe on them by ſounds. Crafty ſelf-intereſt ſows the ſeeds of impoſture, ignorance and indolence are the ſoil, and an abundant harveſt of errors is yielded to princes and to ſtateſmen. Men talk and will not think. The tongue can move almoſt without effort, but to think requires labour, abſtraction from pleaſure, and the ſubjection of the paſſions.

The ſoldier is an armed man—the citizen is an armed man—arms are arms—therefore the ſoldier is a citizen, and the citizen is a ſoldier. It is dangerous that ſoldiers ſhould be permitted to declare opinions

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on matters of government, therefore it is dangerous that the armed citizen ſhould be permitted to declare opinions on matters of government.—*Probatum eſt.*

The bulk of mankind can diſcern arms and a red coat, can diſcern a ſoldier and a yeoman ſimilar in accoutrements and figure, with the common ſhape of man, and the common ſtrut of ſoldier. But the bulk of mankind, without new illumination, cannot diſcern the true nature of civil government, cannot diſtinguiſh its uſes from its abuſes, cannot diſcern that the armed citizen is eſſential to, the ſoldier incompatible with, the perfection of civil government; that the one is the guardian of liberty, the other the inſtrument of oppreſſion, with which bad governments have at all times overawed the people, have robbed them of their rights, ſhut them out from the light of ſcience and almoſt from the light of heaven, darkened their habitations, and their minds, fleeced their bodies, and blotted out their intellect. The bulk of mankind cannot diſcern that the people ſhould overawe the government, and not the government, the people. Princes and ſtateſmen know that the bulk of mankind do not think, becauſe ignorant. Princes and ſtateſmen therefore endeavour to keep men ignorant, that they may not think, that they may be hood-winked, and led captive by words without knowledge.

What! The yeomen diſcuſs politics! Publiſh their opinion on politics! Armed men canvaſs matters of government! Overawe the government! Why then are they armed? Is it by words that they are to overawe the government, or is it by arms? Are they armed

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as mere ſoldiers, or as citizens? If as mere ſoldiers, let it be ſaid ſo—and let them, as mere ſoldiers, overawe the people. If as citizens—let them ſupport the rights of the people, and not ſuffer the government to deſtroy the Conſtitution. If they are neither citizens nor ſoldiers—if they are ſomething diſowned both by liberty and by deſpotiſm—if they are heteroclites in ſociety, anomalies in the body politic—let them lay down their arms.—Arms, which they cannot uſe as ſoldiers, and which deprive them of their rights as citizens.

Overawe the government! Happy for the nations of the earth, if governments were overawed in the ſenſe, in which princes and ſtateſmen underſtand the term. Happy for the nations of the earth, if ſoldiers were unknown, and the people armed. We ſhould neither be trodden down by tyranny, nor convulſed by revolution.

The plain truth is, that the apparent impropriety of armed citizens declaring their ſentiments in that character on political ſubjects, ariſes from this, that all citizens are not what they ought to be—armed. It ariſes not from any contradiction to the juſt principles of civil government, but from civil government in general not being founded on juſt principles. It ariſes from the weakeſt, though the moſt common of all reaſoning—reaſoning from the abuſe againſt the uſe. But in this country, the conſtitution of which is founded on juſt principles, ſuch reaſoning needs only to be ſtated in order to be expoſed. Here, as Blackſtone ſays, the people

have a right to carry and to uſe arms in defence of their liberty, and conſequently in defence of that conſtitution, which they have choſen as a means of guaranteeing the enjoyment of that liberty. In this country a portion of the people has been invited by the parliament to aſſume the actual exerciſe of that right, to arm in defence of the conſtitution. Now, to affirm that theſe men are armed in defence of the conſtitution, and may fight in defence of it, that they are armed and ſworn expreſsly for the purpoſe of defending it, but that by that very act, they have renounced all right to every means of defending it but one, that they have a right to ſave it by blood, but not by words, by war, but not by peace, is ſuch miſerable, ſuch unbluſhing nonſenſe, as eludes and mocks the chaſtiſement of reaſon and of ridicule. It is too ſilly to be refuted, and too dull to be laughed at.

That the Yeoman cannot forfeit the right of declaring his ſentiments on political ſubjects, which may affect his deareſt intereſts, by having armed to defend theſe very intereſts, if neceſſary, by the ſword; is a propoſition ſo plain and irrefragable, that an apology may ſeem wanting for having entered into an elaborate deduction of ſuch an obvious truth. It is an obvious truth—but it is an important one, involving, it may be, in its practical application, the preſervation of the Conſtitution and Independence of this country. It is an obvious truth—but it has been denied, and the denial appears to have been ſilently and tamely acquieſced in. It is an obvious truth—but he knows little of the human heart, who does not know

know that the plaineſt truths will be controverted by bad men, whenever it is the intereſt of bad men to controvert them; and he knows little of the human underſtanding, who does not know the facility, with which it ſupplies to the willing heart, the deluſions of falſehood. When a propoſition in its true ſenſe cannot be denied, its ſenſe will be really, though not formally, changed, and a diverſity of ideas diſguiſed under an identity of terms. As far as ſix letters of the Engliſh alphabet conſtitute the Yeoman, he will remain; but, for the reſt, he is no more. In the place of the citizen we find the ſoldier, the ſlave ſubſtituted for the freeman. The multitude attends to the ſound, not to the idea, and is convinced. The Yeoman views his uniform and accoutrements, ſhoulders his firelock, and forgets that he is free.

Not unfrequently too, truth will be admitted and eluded. It will be ſaid, the Yeomen certainly cannot forfeit the right of declaring their ſentiments on queſtions affecting their political intereſts by having armed to defend theſe intereſts when invaded, but why not declare their ſentiments in the common maſs of their fellow citizens? Why declare their ſentiments, as Yeomen? Why?—Becauſe they are Yeomen. Becauſe by becoming ſuch they have acquired not a new right, but an accidental propriety—a temporary claſſification with an appropriate ſignificancy—an individuality as an aggregate, whereby they can be at once numbered and contradiſtinguiſhed, among the various claſſes of their fellow citizens. In every ſociety ſuch claſſifications will ariſe from a thouſand accidental circumſtances. The members of the ſeveral claſſes have

certain properties common to all, becauſe eſſential to all as citizens, but each claſs will alſo have certain adventitious qualities, which inſulate, and diſtinguiſh it from thoſe around it; which, in a word, make it a claſs. The Yeomanry of Ireland is a kind of corporate exiſtence which holds its charter not from the crown, but from the genius of the Conſtitution.

Why, on that great queſtion of national independence, or annihilation, which now agitates this country, do we every day hear of Reſolutions publiſhed by the different claſſes in the community? Becauſe it anſwers the twofold purpoſe of convenience and of influence. As compoſed of citizens, all theſe claſſes have certain eſſential rights in common, and alſo certain adventitious and accidental qualities, which individualize each claſs, and hold it up to the nation at large, to judge of its integrity, its talents, its property, its reſpectability, or its meanneſs. For not only muſt the character of the individual members of each claſs, as individuals, as far as that can be known, but alſo the character of the claſs itſelf ariſing from thoſe adventitious circumſtances, which make it a diſtinct claſs, naturally determine in a great degree the attention due by the community to its opinions. The character of individuals, as ſuch, can be comparatively aſcertained by few, while the character of the claſs may be eaſily known to the nation. By means of this claſſification, therefore, not only can the ſentiments of the people on any national queſtion be more eaſily numbered, but alſo weighed.

Thus

Thus it appears that every man in theſe ſeveral claſſes has eſſential qualities and accidental qualities. The firſt ſpecies natural, the latter ſuperinduced—the one common, the other appropriate—the one permanent, the other mutable. When the citizen diſcharges the office of a Grand-juryman, he retains all the eſſential rights of a citizen, and alſo acquires an accidental character, in which he with great propriety publiſhes his ſentiments on political ſubjects. The office of a Grand-juryman has given him an accidental name and character notorious to the whole community, which ſtamp the value of his political opinions, and gives them a currency commenſurate with that notoriety. He paſſes through the entire kingdom for pretty nearly what he is worth. Upon examination too, it will be found that among the various adventitious circumſtances, which thus form and diſcriminate the different claſſes in ſociety, there will almoſt conſtantly exiſt ſome of a ſtriking political nature, which are of principal importance in aſcertaining the credit due to any declaration of political ſentiments. Theſe political circumſtances being generally intereſting, are generally known. So that while the political character of the individual himſelf can, in the nature of things, be known to very few, his character as belonging to a claſs may be known to the entire body politic. If the names of the worthy gentlemen, who compoſe the Corporation of Derry, ſhould appear in the newſpapers annexed to any political opinion, how few could poſſibly judge of the degree of credit attached to the ſignatures of theſe reſpectable citizens! whereas, if they publiſhed the ſame opinion in their corporate capacity, not only this country,

try, but probably all Europe could form a very adequate idea of its importance. The political character of claſſes of men in general repreſents with great faithfulneſs, the political character of the individuals, who compoſe them, and muſt neceſſarily be known to thouſands, who can never hear ſo much as the names of the individuals themſelves. This claſſification is in ſociety, what general principles are in ſcience, it enables us to reaſon a priori, where we muſt otherwiſe proceed by a tedious induction from particulars.

Hence the propriety and utility of any claſs publiſhing an opinion, particularly on political ſubjects, as a claſs. While its members, are individually unknown to the public, and conſequently can at moſt only be eſtimated by mere numeration, as a claſs it affords all the advantages of numeration, and many more. Its members can be weighed in the balance of truth, where character alone inclines the ſcale.

Experience too demonſtrates, that amidſt the variety of cauſes, which determine the characters, and influence the actions of mankind, the *l'eſprit du corps*, or ſpirit of *Caſt*, as it may be called, has commonly the greateſt weight of any. So that by only knowing the *Caſt*, to which a man belongs, a more accurate eſtimate of his principles and conduct can, in general, be formed, than if we knew every other circumſtance of his condition, without knowing the fraternity, in which he is enrolled. This *eſprit du corps* is capable of being generally known, and generally eſtimated; its influence is powerful, whether malignant or benign;

and,

and, in judging of the political ſentiments of men, it is, perhaps, the only conſideration, which can determine the public mind in forming a juſt opinion of their value.

Theſe obſervations, which appear to be founded on juſt principles of reaſoning, and confirmed by experience, furniſh an obvious and ſatisfactory reaſon why the Yeomanry of Ireland may declare, are bound in duty to declare, their ſentiments on ſubjects of national political concern, in their diſtinctive character of yeomen. The yeomanry are a claſs in ſociety, poſſeſſing all the eſſential rights of citizenſhip in common with the reſt of the ſociety, but at the ſame time diſtinguiſhed by certain peculiar qualities ſuperinduced by adventitious circumſtances, which render them the object of diſtinct attention, capable of diſtinct valuation, and of diſtinct efficiency. By theſe circumſtances they have acquired a diſtinct political exiſtence and character. They have been called to the actual enjoyment of a right the moſt important. They have been ſummoned by the Conſtitution to arm in its defence in the hour of danger. They have obeyed the ſummons. The legiſlature has recorded their zeal and their ſervices. They have been called the ſaviours of the land. Panegyric has been exhauſted in deſcribing their loyalty and their patriotiſm. Thus placed on an eminence, to which their countrymen naturally look up with great expectation, will it be ſaid that the YEOMEN OF IRELAND ſhould blend their voices, and hide their heads in the common maſs, while grand juries, while guilds, and while corporations appear in a character

a character diſtinctive and appropriate? Will it be ſaid that the ſaviours of the land muſt not declare, "We have ſaved the land, and we will again ſave it, if neceſſary, whether aſſailed from without or from within, by Buonaparte, or by Pitt?" Will it be ſaid, that men ſworn to defend the Conſtitution ſhall not declare, "We have ſworn to defend the Conſtitution, and we will keep our oaths?" Will it be ſaid that men, who can with moſt effect ſpeak out in the cauſe of liberty, muſt be ſilent? And that the capacity of being uſeful impoſes the duty of being inactive! Will it be ſaid that remedy is preferable to prevention, war to peace, and that where argument may convince, and opinion awe, reaſon muſt be ſhackled, and ſentiment repreſſed? Will it, indeed, be ſaid, that the YEOMEN OF IRELAND, the ſworn guardians of our civil polity, and who have bled in its defence, have by the very act of preſerving the conſtitution, forfeited the faireſt and moſt uſeful privilege, which it ſecures: that men diſtinguiſhed from their fellow citizens by merit, muſt ſuffer the pains of delinquency, and that the ſervice of the patriot muſt be rewarded by an approximation to the ſlave? Or if ſuch things ſhould be ſaid by miniſters, and their hirelings, by men, who reaſon to deceive, who adviſe to betray, and who *divide to enſlave*; by men, who would extinguiſh all the knowledge, wither all the induſtry, and emaſculate all the manhood of the land: if by ſuch men ſuch things ſhould be ſaid, will the YEOMEN OF IRELAND ſurrender their underſtandings and their feelings, their rights, their intereſt, their duty, their honor, and their oaths,

to

to the deluſions of impoſture, and the machinations of tyranny?

If the right of the YEOMANRY to declare their ſentiments on political ſubjects, as citizens, as members of a ſtate, the conſtitution of which recognizes and guarantees the natural indefeaſible rights of man, be clear and indiſputable; if the propriety and utility of exerciſing this right, in their public character of Yeomen, be alſo clear and indiſputable, can there be a doubt of the ſacred obligation of exerciſing it, with zeal, and with courage, on occaſions ſufficiently important to demand political exertion?

Who are the YEOMANRY OF IRELAND? A portion of the people eminently diſtinguiſhed from the reſt by appropriate characteriſtics, which arreſt attention, and give weight to opinion. What is the people? The great aggregate of individuals united in ſociety for the purpoſe of ſecuring general happineſs by a union of wills and of ſtrength, the ſource of all political authority, the final arbiter, on earth, of all political action. In every ſtate, therefore, the men, to whom the people has, through the Conſtitution, committed the government, muſt, of right, obey the voice of the people. What is the voice of the people? Such an expreſſion of the general will as leaves no doubt of its title—*vox populi vox Dei.* The will of the people is the only earthly authority, which can rightfully conſti-

tute civil government.—This will is abſolute, and independent of all human convention. Each individual in ſociety is accountable for his conduct, ultimately, as a moral agent, to the ſearcher of all hearts; immediately, to the whole community, as a member of the civil aſſociation; but the community itſelf, as an aggregate, is accountable to no tribunal under heaven.

What is the civil conſtitution of a ſtate conſtituted on principles of moral right? It is the *primary inſtrumentality* contrived by the people for attaining the end of political aſſociation. What is the government? The *ſecondary inſtrumentality* framed to give effect to the firſt. In other words, the Conſtitution is the rule preſcribed by the people, according to which the Government is to act. The government is the machine itſelf in motion, the Conſtitution is the law, by which that motion is to be directed. In this country, for inſtance, the mode, by which laws are to be enacted, and adminiſtered, is, the Conſtitution. The Parliament, and the Executive, conſtitute the Government. In every civil ſociety the people poſſeſſes an undoubted right, originally, to create, and ever after, to new model, the Conſtitution; and to depoſe and puniſh, according to circumſtances, the government. But the government cannot poſſeſs a right of altering the conſtitution. The Government is a mere machine, to which the people has ordained its laws of action, without an iota of power beyond the

the laws preſcribed. It is monſtrous to maintain that the Government can change the Conſtitution. It is ſpeculative tyranny, a mental uſurpation of the rights of the people. The Government change the Conſtitution! By force and by fraud it may—by right it never can—Such an act inſtantly diſſolves its own conſtitutional exiſtence, it cannot rightfully ſubſiſt a moment longer.

Now, as in every civil ſociety the government muſt unavoidably poſſeſs various means of defeating the ends of its inſtitution in the very powers neceſſary to give its inſtitution effect, as bad men may introduce themſelves into the adminiſtration of the Government; every Conſtitution ſhould be framed with a view to counteract by every poſſible contrivance the unavoidable inconveniences of a body politic. As men in power are frequently weak and wicked, every Conſtitution ſhould be formed upon a calculation of human imbecility and corruption. The violent diſſolution of the body politic, is an event moſt anxiouſly to be guarded againſt. But as Liberty alone can make civil ſociety a bleſſing, as where the ſecurity of this is not the great object of the Conſtitution the body politic had much better be diſſolved than exiſt, and as the people poſſeſſes the right of diſſolving it; even upon the principle of preventing the evils almoſt inſeparable from political revolution, every means, which can be deviſed, at once ſecuring the ends of ſociety, and guarding againſt its violent

diſſolution, ſhould make a part of the proviſions of the Conſtitution. In this point of view no means appear more admirably adapted to both theſe purpoſes, to the preſervation of Liberty, and the prevention of Revolution, than the acknowledged right in the people of declaring their judgment and feelings on matters of Government, and the free exerciſe of this right. From Nature the people poſſeſſes this right independent of a civil code. But happy is it when a Conſtitution is formed expreſsly recogniſing this ſalutary controul over the Government. Happy is it where a Conſtitution is founded on the baſis of Liberty, and embraces, in its proviſions, every ſubſidiary means of ſecuring its own permanence, and warding off the evils of diſſolution.

Such is the Conſtitution, which we boaſt. Such is the Conſtitution, which invites and commands the people of this country, to raiſe the voice, in order to prevent the neceſſity of raiſing the arm in its defence. To defend that Conſtitution which the people has choſen as the inſtrument of happineſs, if neceſſary, by *force*, is a ſacred duty impoſed on us by Nature, and kept conſtantly in view by the Conſtitution itſelf, which by arming the people, reminds them of the duty. But it is a prior duty to defend the Conſtitution by the way of peace rather than by the ſword, and this duty does the ſame Conſtitution anxiouſly inculcate in the various means, which it provides for the free

expreſſion

expreſſion of the public will. YEOMEN OF IRELAND, do you not feel theſe united obligations? When the Conſtitution ſummons you to its defence, by every principle of reaſon, of intereſt, and of glory, are you not bound to obey the call?

That a neceſſity for ſuch a ſummons might exiſt in the viciſſitude of human affairs, the experience of mankind forbids us to doubt. If, for inſtance, a time ſhould arrive when a *part* of the government of this country, forgetting the right by which the government exiſts, and the ends, for which it was created, forgetting that it exiſts by the people, and for their uſe, ſhould attempt the ſubverſion of the conſtitution, to which the government itſelf is but miniſterial, while both are but miniſterial to the happineſs of the people, and while both can by the people alone be rightfully deſtroyed—if it ſhould attempt this ſubverſion by means the moſt diabolical and foul—if it ſhould artfully promote religious feuds among the people in order to make the animoſity of contending ſects ſubſervient to a remote and deep-laid ſcheme of common ſubjugation—if it ſhould, with the ſame infernal policy, inſtigate a ſtarved and tortured peaſantry to rebellion againſt the ſtate, in order at once to terrify the titled and the rich, and to have a pretence for thining the population of the land—If, in quelling that rebellion, it ſhould exerciſe cruelties unparalleled in the annals of fanaticiſm—if it ſhould make the gentry of the country inſtruments of torture, in order to

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fix in the mind of the poor a deep and lasting rancour againſt the higher ranks in ſociety—if it ſhould afterwards hold out to the mangled peaſantry, a hollow and treacherous peace, to conceal, under the maſk of mercy, the demon of perdition—if it ſhould by every inſidious artifice, by addreſſing itſelf to pride, avarice, and fear, to all the malignant and all the ſordid paſſions of the human breaſt, goad on the parliament to the enacting of ſanguinary laws, in order to excite the terror and abhorrence of the people, that feeling the exiſtence of the parliament a curſe, the people might ſeek relief in its annihilation—if it ſhould with unequaled inſolence and effrontery, publiſh and boaſt of its crimes, and unfeelingly urge them as arguments for deſtroying the conſtitution—if, finding all theſe means unſucceſsful, its deteſtable arts expoſed and defeated, one portion of the people reſtored from fanaticiſm to the empire of reaſon and humanity, the reſt willing to forget the inſtruments in the inſtigators of their ſufferings, if finding itſelf thus baffled it ſhould change its method of attack, if it ſhould aſſail the Conſtitution by Parliament, and the Parliament by Corruption—if this corruption ſhould become unmeaſured, open, and avowed—if this corruption ſhould ſucceed, and the Parliament ſhould be ready to deſtroy the Conſtitution—if nothing could arreſt this moſt impudent and infamous traffic of the rights, independence, and glory of the land, but the united voices of the people, the univerſal proteſt of the nation againſt the

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act of its eternal ſubjection—if nothing but this, or a revolution, could reſcue Ireland from the grave—if your countrymen feeling the inevitable alternative, ſhould wiſely reſolve to try firſt the way of peace, and endeavour to appal by the public voice, this vile portion of the Government thus wickedly and arrogantly aſſailing the Conſtitution. —If ſuch a time as this ſhould arrive—YEOMEN OF IRELAND, could *you* be ſilent?

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6 DE 58